



April 19, 2007

Greetings!

It has been almost a year since Roger Brooks' assessment highlighting the need to improve signage in the Asheville area. Since that time the Asheville Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) and the City of Asheville have steadily worked toward achieving a comprehensive plan for wayfinding throughout Buncombe County.

Several months ago, a group called the Partnership on Wayfinding (POW) Task Force was formed made up of representatives from the ACVB, the City of Asheville, NC Department of Transportation, Asheville Regional Airport, and the Towns of Black Mountain, Weaverville, Woodfin and Biltmore Forest.

On behalf of the POW Task Force, the City of Asheville released a Request for Qualifications from leading wayfinding firms. Of those who submitted statements, three firms were asked to make presentations to the POW Task Force and other partners. Based on the presentations, the ACVB and City staff requested that Hillier Architecture submit a proposal for the comprehensive plan. We are in the process of contracting with Hillier Architecture for the comprehensive wayfinding strategic plan at an estimated cost of \$150,000.

The City and County have already committed a combined \$100,000 towards the strategic plan. The POW Task Force and other partners are anticipated to contribute to the remaining \$50,000. In addition to being financial partners for the Asheville Area Comprehensive Wayfinding Program, the task force will also request funding for the capital construction costs of the program through the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority's (BCTDA) Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF). While the BCTDA has expressed a strong commitment to funding a majority of the fabrication and installation of the wayfinding elements at an estimated \$750,000 to \$1 million, it is important to note that the project will have to follow the same application process expected of all other regional projects requesting funding through the TPDF.

The proposal for the wayfinding plan is county-wide. Along with a plan for vehicular and pedestrian directional signage the wayfinding comprehensive plan will address, but is not limited to, the following elements: public parking identification, interstate and highway trailblazers, gateway identification, destination/attraction identification and map kiosks identifying the towns and cultural districts throughout county. The wayfinding plan will also include:

- interpretive signage,
- suggested retail merchant sign designs,
- removal plan for redundant signs, and
- recommendations for future infrastructure improvement.

Because the wayfinding project is now on the fast track toward completion, please let me know if your organization is discussing future development or any other planning project that may impact this program so that we can coordinate our efforts. I will be in contact with many of you soon as stakeholder interviews and community input sessions are scheduled in early May. Thank you in advance for your support of this important and timely project. Please contact me at 828-210-2724 or [cmarvill@exploreasheville.com](mailto:cmarvill@exploreasheville.com) with any questions.

Regards,

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